

MI House of Representatives
Agriculture Committee Testimony

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Hi, my name is Ric Buikema and I live in northern Kent County. I, along with my dad and 2 brothers share a passion for bowhunting deer and practicing quality deer management on the 40 acres that my dad owns in southern Mecosta County. We have a good success on the 40 acres over the past 20+ years and it is the sole reason we own the land. Recently we have invested a lot of time, money, and effort into creating 5 food plots and planting several varieties of fruit trees and oak trees to help progress the habitat on the land.

In July 2010, we first noticed signs of feral pigs. The sign we first noticed was wallows and rooting in the food plots. The damage was extensive in many areas of the plots. The hogs were creating mud baths and destroying the plots we had planted that year. The rooting had killed the oats and brasica and had turned a once thriving plot into sections of mud. We also had several game camera pictures of hogs that confirmed their presence.

I had read articles in the past on feral pigs and always thought that it was overstated and thought there was no way we would ever see one on our property. We simply spend too much time in the woods hunting, scouting, and working on the property to have a problem without seeing a pig if we had a problem. This turned out to be completely wrong. As additional game camera pictures came in, all during the middle of the night, I came to accept the fact that we indeed had a wild pig problem on our land.

I contacted the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy and was able to work with them and the USDA Wildlife Service to get a corral trap to set up in the most problematic area. After slowly constructing the trap, section by section, over the course of a month, we successfully live trapped 5 hogs at the same time. The largest hog was about 250 pounds and had long black hair. All the pigs were killed and butchered. Over the next few weeks, we trapped 2 more singles. Then, during the muzzleloader season, my dad killed 2 more just before dark with his muzzleloader. To date, we have trapped or killed 9 feral pigs on just 40 acres.

As of today, the food plots still show plenty of sign of damage from rooting and wallows. You can go in the area on a warm, calm day and actually smell pigs.

The feral pig problem on our land has had a major impact on our hunting. This past year, we saw fewer deer on our property and I never saw a mature buck. My dad had two experiences where there was deer feeding on a plot and suddenly ran off. Within a minute of the deer running off, pigs entered the plot. The pigs have had a major adverse effect on our hunting, and this is the only reason we own this land. Our time and money spent on procuring this property is being wasted by the hogs on our land.

Within 4 miles to the northwest of our property is the Super G ranch that offers Russian boar hunts for \$300 and the pictures of the Russian boars on their website look exactly like the hogs killed on our land.

These pigs have proved to be extremely difficult to hunt or even see during daylight hours. It amazes me to this day, the lack of sightings that occur in such a small area with a confirmed pig population. We will continue to trap and/or kill any of these invasive, destructive pigs we encounter.

Thank you for your time.









